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/For specific information on the political division of the Kerala state see the following:
kingdoms---635
nads (chiefdoms)---634
desams (villages)---621./

- 241 Large plantations of tea, coffee, rubber and
313 cinnamon have been developed, chiefly by British, in the highlands in the past hundred years, and in the forests teak provides a basic industry.
- 132 The rainfall is very heavy, especially in the north where the mountains encroach nearer to the sea. Through most of the area it varies between 75" and 170"; in the extreme south it drops to 32". Most of the rain comes with the southwest monsoon between May and September; lighter rains occur with the northeast monsoon in late November and December. Humidity is always very high. In most areas two wet paddy crops are taken in a year, in February and September. The temperature varies from 70° to 90°, and is hottest in April just before the monsoon breaks.

● [4] (2) Political Divisions

- 63/ From the establishment of British supremacy in 1792, until July 1949, the Malabar Coast was divided into three political areas. In the north is the Malabar District of Madras State, in area 5,790 square miles. It is governed in internal affairs by the legislative assembly of Madras, and is under a Collector (of land revenue) who lives in Calicut, the capital of the district. The port of Cochin is also administered as part of Malabar District. In the centre was Cochin State, in area 1,493 square miles. It was governed internally by the Maharaja of Cochin, assisted by the Cochin legislative assembly, whose headquarters was in Ernakulam, the capital. In the south was Travancore State with an area of 7,625 square miles, under the Maharaja

- 63/ of Travancore and the Travancore legislative assembly, with headquarters in the capital, Trivandrum. On July 1st, 1949, by order of the Central Legislative Assembly in Delhi, the two southern states were integrated as the United States of Travancore and Cochin. The Maharaja of Cochin retired from office, and the Maharaja of Travancore became for the duration of his life the first Rajpramukh of the new united state. The State now has its headquarters and government offices [5] at Trivandrum.
- 10/ Despite these partly accidental political divi-
197 sions, the Malabar Coast is a discrete cultural area. Malayalam, (a Dravidian language strongly influenced in vocabulary by Sanskrit) which became distinguished as a deviant dialect of Tamil about the twelfth century, is the mother-tongue of all but a few immigrant Tamil groups in south Travancore. The area has also had some degree of political unity in the distant
174 past as the ancient kingdom of Kerala. The early history of Kerala is unknown. It was ruled by the Perumals, a succession of kings who seem to have come from outside Kerala and who may have been feudatories in the wider em-
175 pire of Chera. Their government came to an end sometime between the fourth and eleventh centuries A.D. After this Kerala was split into many petty kingdoms under indigenous Rajas of Nayar stock, having matrilineal descent. These continually fought each other and, from 1498, with the coming of the Portuguese and later the Dutch, English and French, made various alliances with these powers to gain their

175 individual ends. Their struggles were eclipsed by the Muslim invasions from Mysore which began in 1766, and ended when the East Indian Company took over the area in 1792. But the idea of a United Kerala has not died, and has been repeatedly suggested since India attained [6] Independence in 1947.

161 (3) Population

The Malabar Coast is the most densely populated part of India. The figures for 1931 show a population of 3, 533, 944 for Malabar; 1, 205, 016 for Cochin; and 5, 095, 073 for Travancore. In Malabar the mean density was 610 per square mile; in Cochin, 814; and in Travancore, 668. This includes forest and lagoon areas. The mean density of habitable land in Cochin was 1, 400.

[51] Relative to the present exploitation of resources the whole coast is overpopulated. Most of the people lead a hand-to-mouth existence on an income barely sufficient to support life. Want and indebtedness are chronic and there is much unemployment.

Reliable figures are not available for before 1891, but at least since that date and probably for 50 to 100 years previously, a great increase has taken place. The figures for 1901 were for Malabar, 2, 557, 736; for Cochin, 722, 906; and for Travancore, 2, 557, 736. This increase in population is part of the baseline from which we must start in analysing kinship systems.

174 II The Traditional Political Background 631 European and Arabic reports on the Nayars

174 take us back to before 1498, when Vasco da Gama
 631 first reached Calicut. From the mid-fifteenth
 ● century until the present, there is a fairly continuous series of records, by Arab, Portuguese, Dutch and later East India Company traders, and finally by British government officials and by Malayalis themselves. We may conveniently refer to the period before 1792, when the East India Company assumed government, as the period of the traditional political and economic organization, in contrast to the period between 1792 and 1947, which is the period of British rule. My picture of the traditional social structure is a composite reconstruction from literature and from the reports of my informants. It is not possible in the limits of this paper to give the derivation of each statement, but a bibliography appears at the end.

[127]

It seems clear from the literature that from the breakdown of the ancient kingdom of Kerala (c. 7th century?) until about the 14th century, the coast was divided into many small independent chiefdoms (nads.) Each nad was headed by a petty military chief of the Nayar caste. Sometime in the 9th century, the area was revisited by Arab traders after a long absence, who began to trade with the coastal chiefdoms in pepper and coconuts. Sometime between the 11th and 13th centuries, gunpowder was introduced by the Arabs, and it appears to have been from this date that some of the chiefs began to conquer neighbouring chiefdoms and to organize small kingdoms. By the early 15th century, the chief of these kingdoms were, from north to south,

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131 those of Kolattunad, Kottayam, Kurumbranad, Kadattunad, Calicut, and Walluvanad (in what is now Malabar District), Cochin (the modern Cochin State) and to the south, the various feudatory chiefdoms of the kingdom of Travancore. By 1496 when the Portuguese arrived, however, the Zamorin (king) of Calicut, who had gained power by extensive Arab trade, had temporarily conquered the Walluvanad and Cochin kingdoms and reduced their rulers to the status of vassal lords. The Portuguese, allied with the Cochin Raja, drove back the Zamorin northward out of Cochin during the 16th century. From then on, wars between the major kingdoms were incessant for the next three centuries. The English reached Malabar in 1615, the Dutch in 1639, and the French in 1725. Each European trading power allied itself with one or other kingdom and took part in successive battles until, in 1763, the northern half of the coast was temporarily overrun by Muslim armies from Mysore to the northeast. The Mysorean invasions ended in 1792 with the settlement of the whole area by the British East India Company, and the establishment of the modern British political organization.

101 [9] Today, the coast is still divisible into three major areas, distinguished by differences in the names and numbers of the castes who occupy them, by slight differences of dialect, dress and dietetic habits, and more marked differences in ritual beliefs and practices, and most markedly, by differences in the kinship systems of the several Hindu castes. The northern area is that of the modern North Malabar District, north

101 of the Kora River, comprising the former kingdoms of Kolattiri, Kottayam, Kadattunad and part of Kurumbranad. The central area comprises the modern South Malabar District and Cochin State (the former kingdoms of Calicut, Walluvanad and Cochin), and the southern area, 174 the kingdom of Travancore. In the course of 631 fieldwork it became clear that these overall differences of custom and social structure were connected with major political boundaries in the period of native rule. Though divisible into separate small kingdoms and chiefdoms, the whole of North Malabar District was temporarily overrun by the Kolattiri Rajas in the 16th and 17th centuries. The central area at one period or another was all conquered by the Zamorins and incorporated in the Calicut empire, while the whole southern area eventually became subject to the Travancore Rajas. In each of these three major areas, a somewhat different political system operated, [10] and in accordance with this the higher castes, especially the Nayers, were differently divided into subcastes with separate administrative functions: each of these subcastes in turn had a kinship system influenced by its occupation, relationship to the land, and 601 separate historical tradition. Much confusion 114 has arisen in past discussion of Nayar kinship because of failure to differentiate between the three areas: it was assumed that the Nayers had one kinship system, whereas they in fact had three, with different terminological structures. 121 In this paper I describe the traditional and mod- 101 ern political structures and the Nayar kinship

121 system of the central area of South Malabar and
101 Cochin, with brief references to social structure
and Nayar kinship in North Malabar. No account
is given of Travancore, since no fieldwork was
done in that area.

631 III The Traditional Political System in the Cen-
524 tral Kingdoms

(1) Caste and Territorial Divisions

Throughout Kerala, the highest Hindu caste
was the Nambudiri Brahmans, ritual and schol-
astic leaders of the people, who today form one
hundredth of the total population. Carriers of
the Sanskrit language and of ancient Vedic cul-
ture, they are thought to have entered Malabar
by peaceful infiltration from the eastern plateau
[11] early in the Christian era and to have estab-
lished themselves, by reason of their literacy
and supposedly superior ritual knowledge, as
religious leaders over the already established
525 population. In the traditional period, they were
631 throughout Kerala important landowners and
priests, in charge of most of the temples and
public rituals. They ranked ritually above the
kings and were above and outside the political
systems of the several kingdoms. Alone of all
the castes, they moved freely unmolested be-
tween enemy kingdoms, married across the boun-
daries, held periodic ceremonies and feasts
attended by their caste-members from all parts
of Kerala, and carried on their separate system
565 of intra-caste administration independently of the
631 administration of justice within the kingdoms.
623 For the latter purpose they divided out Kerala

565 into 64 gramams (caste areas), within each of
 631 which a Nambudiri assembly composed of the
 623 oldest members of the patrilineal extended fam-
 ilies of the area met periodically to arrange pub-
 lic ceremonies and tried cases of offence against
 caste laws. Within each gramam, the Nambu-
 [54] diris were divided into ranked subcastes accord-
 ing to their wealth and ritual functions; these,
 565 however, need not concern us here. Over the
 631 whole area, a dignitary known as the Aravan-
 693 cheri Tamburakkal, [12] who resided in Travancore,
 was universally acknowledged as the rit-
 ual and administrative leader of the Nambudiris.
 This high priest was accorded the right to crown
 the kings of both Calicut and Cochin, though
 these rulers were traditionally at enmity. His
 jurisdiction in matters of the religious law gov-
 erning social relations between castes, was
 acknowledged through^{out} the area. The field of
 social relations of the Nambudiris was thus the
 whole of Kerala.

565 The ritual prestige of Nambudiris was sup-
 596 ported by their wealth: each patrilineal extended
 family owned the land in at least one village, and
 in addition local groups of family heads managed
 lands owned by important Brahman temples in
 [611] each kingdom. The Nambudiris had a patrilineal
 descent system of a peculiar type described be-
 low.

565 Below the Nambudiris in ritual rank came the
 613 royal matrilineal lineages of Calicut, Walluva-
 631 nad and Cochin. Though undoubtedly Nayar in
 origin and general culture, each of these lineages
 considered itself superior in ritual rank to its

525 Nayar subjects within the kingdom. Between
613 kingdoms, royal lineages disputed for rank and
631 would not intermarry: though exogamous, there-
fore, each lineage considered itself to form a
separate and unique [13] subcaste. The Cochin
lineage, being more ancient than the rest, claimed the ritual rank of Kshatriyas (the second of the four varnas or major caste-groups of ancient North India Vedic Society, in ancient times kings and warriors.) The Walluvanad and Calicut lineages, of more recent Nayar origin, were not strictly recognized as Kshatriyas, but were accorded the title of Samantans, a Sanskrit word meaning "leaders." In each royal lineage, the oldest man of the whole lineage, irrespective of branch, was the crowned king and administered traditional secular rule with assistance from advisers of wealthy Nambudiri families of the kingdom, some of whom were employed as ambassadors.

Each kingdom was divided into nads or chiefdoms. In the Zamorin's kingdom, at the height of its power, some of these nads were former independent kingdoms which had been conquered by Calicut but were still ruled by their traditional monarchs who paid tribute to Calicut. These nads included Parappanad, Beypore and Chavakkad, each of whose rulers, though feudatory, claimed and were accorded higher ritual rank than the Zamorin's lineage by reason of their more ancient tradition of government. Other nads of the Calicut kingdom were ruled by hereditary Nayar chiefs (naduvaris) originally appointed by the Zamorin. [14] These ruled with

525 similar powers to those of the feudatory mon-
613 archs, but, though they were accorded the title
631 of Samantans, were considered of lower ritual
rank than the Zamorin's lineage. Similarly,
some nads of the Cochin kingdom were governed
by conquered feudatory kings of higher ritual
rank than, but administratively subordinate to,
the royal lineage, and others by lower ranking
Samantan chiefs appointed by the king. Within
each kingdom, the Samantan chiefs' lineages
formed a single subcaste.

525 Each nad was in turn divided into villages or
621 desams, the basic units of the political system.
423 A desam appears usually to have covered from
one to four square miles, comprising one or more
stretches of dry garden land surrounded by, or
surrounding, flats of alluvial paddy land. The
land in each desam was owned by one landlord
family of superior ritual rank to the other occu-
pants of the villages. In some villages, the land
was owned by a single Nambudiri partilineal
extended family whose large house stood in a
central position in the village. In others, it was
owned by one or other branch of the royal mat-
rilineage which had built a small palace in the
village and whose eldest male member acted as
a village headman. In other villages, the land
was owned by the chiefly matrilineal lineage of
the nad, whether this [15] were of feudatory rank
of vassal Samantan rank. Again in this case the
chiefly family would live in a small palace in the
centre of the village and fulfill the role of head-
man. In other villages, the land was owned by
some famous Hindu temple of the kingdom, often

565 without the direction of the chief. Usually, a
 622 janmi family remained in situ over many gener-
 423 ations. In addition, the janmi was obliged to
 lease off on long term tenure a large part of his
 lands to Nayar retainers and could not retract
 these without the tenant's consent or without the
 aid of a public assembly of tenants in case of
 ill-doing on the part of one of them.

621 Traditional villages are classifiable therefore
 ●631 as 1) Brahman; 2) Temple; 3) Royal; 4) Chiefly;
 565 5) Nayar headmen's villages. In some areas,
 644 a group of villages of the same type might be
 found adjacent to each other; this was particu-
 larly the case with "Brahman" and "Nayar head-
 men's" villages, where four or five might form
 a cluster headed by janmis of the same subcaste.
 [17] In each village, subordinate to the janmi's
 lineage in ritual rank and administrative power,
 came the members of one or other subcaste of
 701 Nayar retainers. Nayar retainers, whom I
 shall also call Military Nayars since most of
 them were soldiers, were divided into three
 subcaste: 1) retainers of Nambudiri Brahmans
 and of temples, called Sudra Nayars in Calicut
 and Walluvanad and Illath Sudra Nayars in Co-
 chin; 2) retainers of the royal lineage, or "pal-
 anquin-bearers," called Pallichans in all three
 kingdoms; and 3) retainers of the chiefs and the
 Nayar village headmen, called Charna Nayars
 in Calicut and Walluvanad and Swaroopattil Sud-
 264 ra Nayars in Cochin. Each of these subcastes
 disputed for ritual rank and in everyday circum-
 stances would not interdine with each other.
 This dispute for rank was possible because they

621 occupied separate sets of villages and were not
 631 subject to each others' jurisdiction. In war,
 565 however, they might interdine freely and spend
 644 the night in each others' houses. In villages
 owned by Nambudiris or by Nambudiri-owned
 temples the retainer-Nayar were of group (1),
 in royal villages, of group (2), and in chiefly
 and village headmen's lineages, of group (3).
 In Calicut and Walluvanad however, group (3)
 was further subdivided into Agattu Charna Nay-
 ars or indoor retainers, [18] and Purattu Char-
 nas or outdoor retainers. Purattu Charnas
 were retainers to chiefs and headmen, Agattu
 Charnas houseservants and clerks (with the title
 Menon - clerk) within the royal palaces. In
 Calicut, the Purattu Charnas were still further
 subdivided into ordinary Purattu Charnas who
 served chiefs and headmen, and special Purattu
 Charnas or Pariccha Menons who formed the
 personal bodyguard of the kind and senior prin-
 ces.

613 In each village, there were traditionally four,
 621 five or six matrilineages of the appropriate re-
 427 tainer subcaste. The separate households or
 566 property-groups within each lineage had the
 hereditary right, granted by the Raja, to occupy
 freely stretches of garden land, and to lease
 large plots of wet rice land on long-term tenure
 from the janmi. This tenure was called kanam;
 the tenant, a kanamdar or kanakkaran. At the
 start of a period of tenure, the legal guardian
 (oldest man or karanavan) of the Nayar retainer
 household paid a lump sum in cash to the janmi,
 called kanam. Thereafter he paid an annual rent

437 landlords, who would otherwise, apparently, have
423 been excluded from the cash economy. Such
[511] money could be spent by the Nambudiri and Nayar aristocracy on clothing and imported luxury goods available in Muslim bazaars in the towns. Some Muslims also held kanam lands in villages whence they could obtain rice and vegetables. Others bought food for cash from Nayar tenants.

[552] Apart from the kanam tenure the use of cash was, however, extremely restricted in inland villages, and surplus cash was converted into gold ornaments or other objects of ostentation. Among
[583] the lower castes small coins had a symbolic value, and a fixed number were handed over in marriage payments, but their use in economic exchange among the lower castes appears to have been negligible.

434 In spite therefore of the considerable overseas
554 trade, the complex division of labour, and the marked differences in wealth (expressed chiefly in size of houses, differences of clothing and jewelry, and types of food) between the several castes, the overall economy of Kerala in the traditional period was relatively stationary, and such social mobility as there was, was confined to the Muslims, Christians and "good" Hindu castes above Nayar retainers. It appears to

[613] have been this fact which permitted the persis-

• [631] tence of such a relatively rigid feudal system and the existence, within each homogeneous local caste group, of a lineage system as the main organizing principle.

642 The "middle class" non-military Nayars, the
 565 Nayar servant castes of menials, all the lower
 polluting castes, and the serfs, were excluded
 from the administrative system of the kingdom.
 Above these castes, the "good" castes formed
 two hierarchies, the one concerned with the pub-
 lic ritual of the state, and the other with secular
 administration. The first hierarchy comprised
 Nambudiris and temple servants; the second,
 royalty, chiefs and Nayar retainers. Nambu-
 diris were largely outside the legal system of
 the kingdom; temple servants, though subject to
 it, took no part in its administration. Political
 organization was in the hands of the Nayars,
 their chiefs, and their royal lineage.

643 While responsible for maintaining traditional
 701 unwritten law and custom (mamool) among the
 631 several castes, the kings were concerned chief-
 ly with amassing soldiers for their armies.

Though in each kingdom the royal lineage owned
 the land in many villages as its private estate,
 its strength was estimated not in territory but
 in numbers of Nayar soldiers. Each nad and
 each desam was classified according to the num-
 ber of Nayar men it could customarily muster
 for war; records[31] of these were kept by the
 702 Nayar clerks of the palaces. The chief duty of
 each naduvári was to assemble regularly the
 soldiers of his nad for military exercises, and
 in time of war to lead them to battle with the
 king himself at their head. Within the nad mili-
 tary training was organized on a village basis,
 sometimes by the Nayar desavári, or, in those
 villages without a Nayar headman, by a Nayar

692 shrine and temporary ostracism were the chief
681 punishments, but at least among Iravas, grave
offenders were sometimes excommunicated with
the consent of the janmi and sold in slavery to
623 Arab traders. The smaller castes of village
servants each had their own assemblies extend-
ing over a group of adjacent villages, who met
582 chiefly at marriages and funerals. In all of these
castes, the local group of the assembly, while
not strictly endogamous, was the group within
which the majority of marriages took place.

631 Among retainer-Nayars, the local group might
692 comprise either one large desam, or a group of
681 two to four adjacent desams when these were
occupied by retainer Nayars of the same sub-
caste. Such an area was called a tara in South
Malabar and a kara in Cochin, the assembly,
a tara-koottam or kara-yogam. The assembly
comprised the headmen of all Nayar property-
groups who met to settle intra-caste disputes,
adjudicate in trials of offences against caste law,
and arrange the public ceremonies of their com-
mon Bhagavadi temple. Offences such as wrong-
ful interdining with low caste men, small debts,
thefts and adultery with women of the lower pol-
luting castes were punished by fines paid to [34]
the Bhagavadi temple, or in grave cases by ex-
communication, and sale into slavery. Similarly
intra-caste offences were settled among desa-
varis within an assembly of the nad, and among
nadavaris within an assembly of the kingdom.
The local Nayar assembly also had power to ar-
bitrate in disputes and offences against the vil-
lage at large among the lower castes. Some

631 cases were carried voluntarily by low caste
692 disputants of different castes to the Nayar ass-
681 embly, but this might also step in by forces in
disputes which threatened the peace of the vil-
lage. Punishments included beatings and fines
[564] to the temple. However, Nayars and Nambu-
diris had also the power of life and death over
their serfs and might have these killed without
recourse to a higher authority. Any Nayar had,
for example, the right to spear at sight a Pulaya
who accidentally touched him, refused to recede
from his approach, or insulted a Nayar woman.

681 In the castes above the serfs, grave crimes
692 were carried to the court of the king. Murder,
sacrilege, the wounding of a cow or of a Brah-
man, and theft from a man of "good" caste,
were punishable by death. Brahmans and wo-
men, however, were never officially put to death.
Brahmans were excommunicated by their own
assemblies, women were sold into slavery with
the Arabs. If, however, a Nayar woman forni-
cated with a man of lower caste (an offence le-
gally punishable by excommunication and slavery)
it is recorded that in fact her own brothers, with
the tacit consent of [35] the ruler, would them-
selves spear her to death. The death sentence
for men of the polluting castes was impalement,
for Nayars, spearing, and for Muslims, hang-
ing. Unsolved civil disputes between high caste
men and Muslims were tried in the royal court
by ordeal, usually of boiling oil.

564 It is interesting to notice that the higher the
571 caste, the wider the field of social relations.
631 For the serfs and lower polluting castes, this

564 was confined to the village or (in the case of the
571 smaller castes) a group of adjacent villages.
631 For retainer-Nayars, apart from their excursions in war, it was confined to the group of adjacent villages of one subcaste; for temple servants and Nayar village headmen, the nad; for naduvaris and kings, the kingdom; and for Nambudiris, Kerala. It may be hypothesized that this variation in the field of social relations of the different ranked orders of the society is intrinsic in any feudal system with centralized political institutions.

582 (4) Hypergamy in the Upper Castes

611 Each of the castes below middle class Nayars was endogamous, as is usually in the caste system throughout India. But among the higher "clean" castes, a complicated system of hypergamous unions linked the several groups. By hypergamy I mean the union of a man of higher caste with a woman of lower caste.

582 In discussing hypergamy, it is necessary first
611 to explain the descent-system of Nambudiris.

596 In the patrilineal [36] extended family of Nambudiris, only the eldest son was permitted to marry, with Vedic rites, within his own caste and beget children for his family. Younger sons
595 had recognized liaisons (not initiated with Vedic rites and regarded by Nambudiris not as marriage but as concubinage) with women of the matrilineal castes, whose children belonged to the mother's caste and lineage by matrilineal descent. However, if in any generation the eldest Nambudiri son was sterile, the second son

613 point in their development. There is plenty of
644 historical evidence, however, to show that they
did so. In many cases, especially of the smaller
Rajas and the chiefs, the kingdom or chiefdom
was also divided between the segments at
some point after their own private estates had
been partitioned.

613 [94] Reference to Map² helps to clarify this
644 statement. Nads I and II (Kolattunad and Arik-
631 kal) were once united under the Kolattiri Rajas,
but nad II early broke away as a small independent
chiefdom ruled by a segment of the lineage
which had been converted to Islam by the Arabs.
Nad I, which remained the kingdom of Kolattiri,
was subdivided into smaller nads ruled by Sam-
antan naduvaris. There are today several lin-
eages of these, but Innes reports that they have
all split off from one of two original lineages.
Nad II was similarly ruled by a high class Nayar
chieftain lineage (14) which at various times was
feudatory to Kolattiri. This lineage divided into
several branches each of which took as portion
of the nad and ruled it independently. Nad IV
was also once ruled by a single naduvari lineage
as one property-group (Mithangath Kovilagath
Thottoli), as feudatory of Kolattiri. In 1766, the
group partitioned its properties between its five
segments, but retained the office of naduvari,
and also a second-athanam, for the first and
second man of the whole lineage.

The Kurumbranad Rajas, (nad X), like the
Kolattiri Rajas, are said to be one of the oldest
ruling families of Kerala and to have received
their nad from the last of the Perumals. The

$\frac{1}{1}$ [See p. 105, category 116 --- Analyst]

613 The area ruled by the Kurumbranad Rajas is
644 thought to have once extended as far south as
631 nad XI, where it bordered on the Zamorin's
territory, and as far north as nads IV and VI.
Nad IX was formerly ruled by the Rajas of Kol-
lam, who are thought to have been an independ-
ent segment of the Kurumbranad family. The
Kollam Rajas were conquered and expelled by
the Zamorins.

The Kottayam Rajas, who ruled nads VII and
XXX, and were in possession of nad XI for a
short time before the British took over, are
said by some informants to have once formed
one lineage with the Kurumbranad Rajas, (with
whom Innes too reports that they were "closely
related".) This is likely, since the two lineages
acknowledge each other to be Kshattriyas, but
will not intermarry. Innes also reports that
nad XXX (a mountainous, sparsely populated
area) was conquered by Kottayam and Kurum-
branad together and later divided between them.
Before the British came, the Kottayam lineage
redivided and one property-group, Parassi, be-
came independent chieftains over part of nad
VI. When the Muslims invaded from Mysore
the main branch of the Kottayam family fled tem-
porarily to Travancore and in their absence
Parassi became rulers of nads VI and XXX.
They later opposed the British settlement of
Malabar and were therefore deposed and not
given a pension. Parassi and Kottayam (who
returned) are still independent lineages but do
not yet intermarry. The Payyormala Nayar
chieftains of nad VIII who ruled as feudatories

613 of Kurumbranad, were also once one lineage,
644 which divided its rule and its lands between
631 three segments. This nad, like nads X and XI
was for a short time conquered by the Zamorin,
and its rulers, along with the Kurumbranad
Rajas, became his feudatories.

The Kadattunad Rajas of nad VII are not one of the oldest lineages of Kerala and are not a segment of one of the neighbouring lineages. Krishna Iyer reports (15) that [96] Kadattunad was once a branch of the Porlattiri royal lineage which once ruled nad XII. The Porlattiri lineage was the first to be dispossessed by the Zamorin and its members are said to have fled north and sought refuge with the Kolattiri lineage. Innes says that the Kadattunad lineage sprang from the union of a Kolattiri woman with a Porlattiri man, but our informants in North Malabar thought that Kadattunad are descended from a Kolattiri man who gave this nad to his Porlattiri wife and children, in accordance with a common North Malabar custom.

The Pulavayi Nayar chieftains of nad XIV were once independent rulers in their jungly nad, but became nominal feudatories of the Zamorin. Their lineage and rule were also divided into several branches. Nads XIII and XV were once united under the Parappu royal lineage, which divided its nad between two branches, both of which were early overrun by the Zamorin. The Beyport Rajas' lineage, which remained as a feudatory of the Zamorin and is still extant, is a branch of the Parappu lineage. Nads XXIII and XXIV were similarly once one with nad XXV

613 under the Palghat Rajas, but the Zamorin drove
644 a wedge into their territory in the 18th century
631 and took nad XXV. The other two nads were
divided between two branches of the Palghat lineage.

Nad XXVIII was formerly ruled by the Chavakkad Rajas, whose lineage became a feudatory of Cochin. The lineage divided into four tavaris, which quarreled with each other for political power. One of these branches, known as the Rajas of Punnattur, finally appealed to the Zamorin for [97] support against the other three, which were supported by Cochin. The Zamorin came to their help, overran the whole nad, and made its rulers feudatory to himself.

The Vellatiri Rajas, who ruled nad XIX and formerly nads XX and XXI as the kingdom of Walluvanad, remained a small lineage and, like the Zamorins, did not partition until the British began to rule. Their numbers then increased and they are now divided into four palaces.

Since the Zamorin's lineage, which maintained its kingdom intact, was one which happened not to increase in numbers or divided its property-group over four centuries, it might be thought tempting to argue that the cohesion of each kingdom traditionally depended on the cohesion of its royal lineage.

However, we must be clear in recognizing that the cohesion and expansion of the Zamorin's kingdom, and to a lesser extent of that of Cochin, and later of Travancore, depended on factors other than the structure of their royal lineages. Chief of these factors were, it seems likely,

613 the expansion of overseas' trade with the Arabs
644 and later, the Europeans, from the twelfth to
631 the eighteenthth centuries; the developments of
better means of communication in the larger
kingdoms of the plains, where this was not too
difficult; some ammassing of wealth in the hands
of rulers; and leading from this, their ability
to organize larger armies which (especially
after the adoption of gun-warfare) permitted
them to conquer neighbouring weaker nads.

The persistence of these larger units seems to
have depended on the strength of their new pol-
itical institutions, chiefly [98] the militia and
the central courts of justice, as well as on a
widening of the field of social relations of the
"good" castes who controlled the administra-
tion. Along with this went a very slow process
of social mobility in the upper reaches of the
society. The caste system of rulers, chiefs,
613 village headmen and retainers was not entirely
644 stationary: retainer-lineages which had dis-
631 tinguished themselves in war were sometimes
565 appointed as desavaris and gradually changed
their ritual rank, and it was possible for a
desavari lineage to increase in wealth and be
made a naduvari lineage, or for a small nadu-
vari lineage to increase in wealth (as did the
Zamorins), expand its territory, and call itself
a royal lineage, claiming the rank of Kshattri-
yas. This process took some time, indeed; it
was not until the eighteenth century that the
Zamorin's lineage, after going through a cere-
mony in which its members passed through the
body of a golden cow, were able to claim that

613 they had been reborn as Kshattriyas, and to
644 shake off their marital ties with feudatory lin-
631 eages and marry their women only to Nambu-
565 diris. The same process went on in other parts
of Kerala; it is even whispered by some in North
Malabar that the Kadattunad lineage started out
as a high class Nayar taravad with the title of
Adiodi and, through outstanding military ser-
vices and marriage alliances with Kolattiri,
gradually established itself first as naduvaris
and later as an independent royal lineage.

613 The size and cohesion of a kingdom thus de-
644 pended not on kinship factors but on political
631 and economic factors such [99] as trade, eco-
601 nomic specialization and the development of
specialized political institutions. When their
kingdoms and private estates became large,
the kinship systems of the royal lineages adap-
ted themselves to this change: they modified
their residence-patterns, practised exclusively
hypergamous marriage, and developed the in-
stitution of athanams. It is arguable that had
their economy and political institutions developed
still further before the British came, they would
have been obliged to change their kinship system
still more, for the unwieldy structure of matri-
lineal lineages, with segments periodically hiv-
ing off and claiming themselves independent,
certainly made it difficult to establish a stable
613 system of succession to the crown. The history
644 of the Cochin lineage, which had two athanams
631 and in the fifteenth century partitioned into five
property-groups, was from 1510 to 1792 one of
perpetual dissension between the heads of

613 property-groups. These in turn scrambled for
644 the crown and in turn allied themselves with the
631 Zamorins, the Portuguese and the Travancore
Rajas to help them to establish their claims.
Despite periodic total conquest by one or other
neighbouring ruler, however, the kingdom was
never divided between its segments as were
many of the smaller chiefdoms, I think because,
like Calicut and Walluvanad, it had developed
trade and centralized political institutions which
would not permit of its reversion to smaller
units. Whether, had their kingdoms grown
much larger the rulers would have been obliged
to abandon the matrilineal system, is a ques-
tion which cannot be answered out of the data
available. [100]

At all events it is clear that despite its militia
and relatively centralized administration, the
whole political structure of the central area,
as well as the kinship system of its rulers, de-
pended for its persistence on a relatively sta-
tionary or only very gradually changing economy
which would permit the perpetuation of heredi-
tary political offices. For the administration,
managed by the "good" upper castes, was built
up round a network of kinship ties. Nambudiris
fathered the Rajas and sporadically, the high
caste population at large; the Rajas fathered the
chieftains, and the chieftains the desavaris;
while the whole retainer Nayar population, des-
pite its division into karas, villages, and lin-
eages linked in perpetual affinal kinship, was
also united throughout the kingdom by the prac-
tice of sexual unions between the mobile

613 soldiers and Nayar women stationary in their
 644 villages. It was left to the British, with their
 631 introduction of a new highly specialized expanding economy with mechanized industry, to crack the system apart. This was essentially a small-scale feudal system - (the Zamorin's kingdom, at the height of its power, cannot have had more than 500,000 inhabitants) - and it depended on the existence of a fairly stable economy with the village as the basic social unit, self-sufficient for food.[101]

NOTES

- 162 (1) In 1931 the matrilineal castes numbered
 [611] roughly one-fifth of the total population.
 (2) Muslims in 1931 numbered about 15% of the total population, being concentrated chiefly in the south of Malabar District. The first conversions to Islam were probably carried out in the ninth century by Arab traders who visited the coast. This community, called the Mappilas, increased greatly after the fourteenth century, but particularly during the Muslim invasions from Mysore in the 1760's. The Muslims of North Malabar District follow matrilineal descent with matrilocal residence; those of other areas follow patriliney. For a brief account of North Malabar Muslim kinship see Gough, "Incest Prohibitions and Rules of Exogamy in three matrilineal groups of the Malabar Coast", in Int. Archives of Ethnography, June 1952.

The Christians of Kerala numbered about 20% of the population in 1931. The Syrian Christians,

MAP II

MALABAR DISTRICT

Showing the boundaries of the nads and kingdoms in the mid-eighteenth century.

NadsRulers

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 Kolattunad | Kolattiri Rajas |
| 2 Randstara | Nayar Chiefs |
| 3 Tellicherry | E. India Co. |
| 4 Iruvattinad | Nayar Chiefs |
| 5 Korangoth | Nayar Chiefs |
| 6 Kottayam | Kottayam Rajas |
| 7 Kodattunad | Kodattunad Rajas |
| 8 Payyermala | Nayar Chiefs |
| 9 Payyanad | Zamorin |
| 10 Kurumbranad | Rajas |
| 11 Tamarasseri | Kottayam Rajas |
| 12 Polnad | Zamorin |
| 13 N. Parappanad | Parappanad Rajas (Zam.) |
| 14 Polavayi | Nayar Chiefs (Zamorin) |
| 15 S. Parappanad | Parappanad Rajas (Zamorin) |
| 16 Ramnad | Zamorin |
| 17 Cheranad | Zamorin |
| 18 Ernad | Zamorin |
| 19 Walluvanad | Walluvanad Rajas |
| 20 Walluvanad | Zamorin |
| 21 Nedungad | Zamorin |
| 22 Kavalappara | Nayar Chiefs |
| 23 Vadamelappuram | Palghat Rajas |
| 24 Tummelappuram | Palghat Rajas |
| 25 Naduvattam | Zamorin |
| 26 Bettatnad | Bettam Rajas (Zamorin) |

NadsRulers

- | | |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| 27 Kutnad | Zamorin |
| 28 Chavakkad | Chavakkad Rajas (Zamorin) |
| 29 Arikkal | Arikkal Rajas |
| 30 Wynad | Kottayam Rajas |
| 31 Cochin | Cochin Rajas |

dependence of India in 1947. Cochin and Travancore were amalgamated in 1949 and, under popular pressure for the formation of linguistic states, the whole area was reunited as the State of Kerala in 1956. This state elected a Communist government in 1957. 75
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After 1498 there were certain changes in Kerala's economy. Trade and towns expanded, gunpowder was introduced and wars became more devastating, and cash transactions became more prevalent among the aristocratic castes in villages (K. M. Panikkar, 1929: chap. XIV). But the basic form of the caste system and the pyramidal system of kingdoms, subordinate chiefdoms, and villages persisted with little change until after the Mysorean conquest. The Calicut kingdom gradually declined after 1498, for the Portuguese allied themselves with the small kingdom of Cochin to the south, freed it from Calicut's overlordship, and used it as a base from which to expel the Arabs and subdue the Zamorins. Nevertheless, with fluctuating boundaries Calicut remained the most powerful kingdom until the 1730's. [177]
[436]
[564]
[631]

Although its internal political boundaries have shifted continually, Kerala is today still divisible into three major cultural areas. These are distinguished by differences in the names and numbers of the castes who occupy them, in dress, dietetic habits and ritual practices, and in the kinship systems of the several Hindu castes. The northern area, north of the Kora River, comprises the former kingdoms of Nileswaram, Kolattunad, Kottayam, and Kadattunad. This was the area dominated by the Kolattiri kings in the fourteenth century and at various periods thereafter. In British times it became the northern part of Malabar District and the southern part of South Canara District; I shall call it North Kerala. The central area comprises the former kingdoms of Calicut, Walluvanad, Palghat, and Cochin. It was over-run by the Zamorins of Calicut at various times between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries. In British times it formed South Malabar District and Cochin State; I shall refer to it as Central Kerala. All the southern area (until recently, Travancore State) was at one time or another subordinate to the kings of Travancore. The political systems—and consequently the internal caste divisions of the Nayars and the forms of their kinship systems—differed in these three areas. Much confusion has arisen in the past because of failure to distinguish between the three regions. It has been assumed that the Nayars had one kinship system, whereas in fact they had three, with different terminological structures. In this paper I describe Nayar kinship in two kingdoms of Central Kerala: Calicut and Cochin. 634
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651 lords and tenants through indigenous Muslim middlemen. At that
439 time the middlemen appear to have paid the villagers directly in
cloth, metals, and luxury goods. Sumptuary laws confined the use of
[431] many imported goods to Brahmans, Nayars, and merchants. Other
strategic goods such as metals and cloth filtered down from the land-
lords and tenants to the lower castes in the form of customary gifts
at festivals.

439 During the period of European trade (1500 to 1792) markets and
436 cash transactions encroached further upon the subsistence economy of
villages. The kings prosecuted larger and larger wars and increasingly
paid their Nayar soldiers in cash, even though they continued to
muster them through the Nayars' "feudal lords."¹ As the pepper and
coconut trade increased, new gardens came under cultivation and
landlords and tenants often sold their spices for cash. The Nayar
[566] retainers seem to have received most of this cash from the towns,
for as tenants they held the bulk of the village's garden lands as well
as receiving their payments in war. From about 1550, therefore, land-
lords, who wished to maintain control of the economy, had to develop
436 some means of extracting money from their tenants. Cash payments
439 thus became a regular feature of the *kānam* tenure (Logan, 1951, I:
427 cxxx). The tenant periodically advanced a cash sum to the landlord
178 as a kind of forced loan, the interest on which was then set off against
the annual payment in kind. At the death of either landlord or tenant
13 per cent of the original sum was deducted from the loan as a
succession fee. The tenant might then repay this amount in cash or
revert to paying a larger share in kind. Later in the period cash
renewal fees seem to have been exacted by landlords every twelve
years. In some cases the tenant would prefer to surrender his land
or to sell his right and move his family to another village. Sales of
landlord rights, even (near the ports) to Europeans or Muslims, also
[425] increased. However, sale of either landlord or tenant rights remained
disreputable, lengthy, and hedged about with legal restrictions until
after the collapse of native rule (K. P. P. Menon, 1929: 309-310;
Logan, 1951, I: 597 *et seq.*; II: cxxiv).

[171] ¹ I use the term "feudal" here without precise definition. In many respects the
[631] political structure of the Central kingdoms was comparable with that of the
stronger Western European principalities such as Flanders and Normandy in the
second half of the eleventh century. There was centralized control of the judiciary,
of armies, trade, and coinage, but within each principality subordinate lords re-
tained minor judicial powers and owned domains and private armies (Stephenson,
1942: 80-92).

439 food and other goods. The population expanded and much formerly
[161] waste land was brought under cultivation as gardens for the produc-
[241] tion of coconuts, pepper, cashew nuts, and cinnamon. Higher in the
[464] mountains Europeans developed estates of tea, coffee, and spices,
[496] which attracted wage labor from villages to the west. The develop-
ment of the steamship, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, and
the entry of railways into Kerala in the 1880's were significant events
in this process.

Political and Economic Systems

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[566] Traditionally, a hierarchy of the major Hindu castes was present as
in Central Kerala, except that large areas of North Kerala had no
Pulayas or agricultural serfs (*ibid.*, I: 148). Nambudiri Brahmins
were fewer than in Central Kerala, but they controlled a small num-
ber of temple estates and claimed religious superiority over the Nayar
rulers. Muslims were the dominant trading population of the ports
and inland trading centers.

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563 The mountainous terrain, heavy rainfall, poor communications,
● 631 sparse population, and comparatively low productivity made political
centralization more difficult than in Central Kerala. The ancient
Kolattiri kingdom was divided into chiefdoms and villages in a man-
ner similar to the later kingdom of the Zamorin, but judicial control
was perhaps never as well centralized as in the Calicut kingdom.
175 From the fourteenth century, when the Zamorins captured most of
635 the Arab trade, the Kolattiri kingship lost some of its former power.
[634] The kingdom disintegrated into three smaller, virtually independent
kingdoms—Kolattunad, Kottayam, and Kadattunad—plus a number
of small border chiefdoms of uncertain allegiance (*ibid.*, I: 343-344).
174 Each of the three North Kerala kingdoms probably had a population
[61] of between 150,000 and 250,000, in contrast to the Calicut kingdom,
635 which seems to have numbered some 600,000 to 720,000 (see note
3, page 473).

175 After 1500 each of the North Kerala rulers sought the help of one
648 or another of the mutually hostile European and Middle Eastern trad-
634 ing powers, thus maintaining a state of fragmentation until the Mys-
635 orean conquest. In the struggles of the seventeenth and eighteenth
centuries some new Nayar chiefs also arose with mushroom rapidity
on the basis of European support and gained partially autonomous
sway over small groups of villages. Political and social mobility among
Nayar aristocrats was thus more marked in North Kerala than in the
more stable central kingdoms. Indeed, a North Kerala proverb re-

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be elucidated only in terms of a psycho-analytic hypothesis. Part V of the essay is therefore an attempt to try out a psycho-analytic approach to Hindu ritual, and to show, with reference to one ceremony, that this approach permits a deeper analysis than is possible if we limit ourselves to a discussion of social function.

The use by anthropologists of psycho-analytic findings to interpret primitive myth and ritual is familiar from modern American writings; it has scarcely been accepted by British anthropologists. I admit that, for anthropologists, psycho-analytic theories must in the long run depend for their authority on analyses of a significant number of individuals in the society whose symbolism it is hoped to interpret. Such data are not, however, at present forthcoming, and in many Indian groups it is doubtful if they will be forthcoming before the myths and rites have died out. In the meantime, as I hope to show, the results of psycho-analytic work in the West can give us insights into the probable unconscious motives behind primitive religious practices, and allow us to formulate new if tentative hypotheses on the connections between the kinship structure of a group and its religious symbolism.

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This essay therefore, while confined to the analysis of one ceremony, fulfils the terms of the Carl Rogers Commission, since it incorporates in a single theory field data recently collected on four Malabar kinship systems; uses the material of other anthropologists (see Nijaypan 1944, 1944; Debe 1953) who have worked on Indian initiation rites in the past ten years, to advance a sociological interpretation of these rites; and tests, with reference to these rites, certain hypotheses of the British school of psycho-analysts put forward in recent years.¹

PART I. THE NAYAR FETTER IN SOUTH MALABAR AND COCHIN

THIS AREA IS IN THE CENTER OF THE MALABAR COAST, south of the Kora River and north of the Travancore-Cochin boundary. Before 1792, it comprised the mutually hostile kingdoms of the Zamorin of Calicut, the Raja of Walluvanad, and the Maharaja of Cochin. The area was temporarily conquered by the Zamorin in the late 15th century, but Walluvanad and Cochin were made feudatory kingdoms. Probably for this reason, Walluvanad and Cochin correspond closely to those of Calicut, since they owed their existence to a political system common to these three kingdoms. By contrast, the kingdoms to the north and south, where the Zamorin failed to penetrate, had different political systems and correspondingly different hierarchies of Nayar sub-castes. Today, the Nayars of South Malabar and Cochin still show greater cultural similarity, feel greater unity, and intermarry more freely than they do with Nayars to the north or to the south.

At the head of each of the central kingdoms was a royal caste, the royal lineage. Being at enmity, the royal lineages disputed for rank, would not intermarry, and, though exogamous, formed each a separate caste. Each however acknowledged itself inferior to the Nambudiri Brahmins (landlords and priests) whose separate caste-organization extended throughout the Malabar Coast, and who were above and outside the laws of the separate kingdoms.

Below the royal lineages came the Nizambans, chiefs (siddhis) of districts (saddis). These owed allegiance to the Raja and had administrative control over the next sub-caste, of Kiriyattil Nayars (called Vellayana Nayars in Cochin), the headmen (samaris) of villages (desams). Below the Kiriyattil came three parallel sub-castes: Siddha Nayars, Charna Nayars (respectively called Bhath Siddhas and Swaropattil Siddhas in Cochin), and Pallichans. Siddha Nayars were hereditary tenants and retainers in villages where the land was owned by a patrilineal family of Nambudiri Brahmins. Charna Nayars were retainers in villages owned by siddharis or desam siddhas. Pallichans owed similar allegiance in villages owned by a branch of the

¹For the psycho-analytic interpretation of this essay I am chiefly indebted to Freud (1913, 1918, 1919), Ernest Jones (1907, 1908), Melanie Klein (1920), and Balaban (1930).

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FEMALE INITIATION RITES ON THE MALABAR COAST

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royal lineage. The retainer sub-castes disputed for rank and, in their separate villages, held the same rights of administration over the lower castes. In all these sub-castes, including the royal lineage, men were trained from the age of seven as soldiers in village gymnasia headed by military leaders (*Asāns*), and formed a permanent, mobile militia of the kingdom. Below the retainer sub-castes in rank came the small, non-military Nayar servant sub-castes of oil-mongers, funeral-priests, washermen, and barbers.¹ Quite apart from these Brahman and Nayar sub-castes, in a separate area of the village lived the lower patrilineal castes of tenants and menials and the lowest, 'exterior' castes of serfs.

The Nayar Kinship System. The Nayar lineage (*taravād*) is exogamous and matrilineal kinship terms are extended throughout its range. Its members are united by the observance of fifteen days' ritual pollution at a birth or death, and traditionally by worship of the spirits of dead heads of the lineage, and of a group of totemic snakes. The lineage is divided into small segments, which I call property-groups, each three to five generations deep. Each group is headed by its eldest man (*ādṛanāraṇ*) who is the legal guardian of its members and controls their property.

The property-group was also until recently the dwelling-group. Residence was, and is still in some houses, uxorilocal: a husband visits his wife after supper and leaves before breakfast. Traditionally, a woman might have any number of lovers of appropriate sub-caste, and a man any number of mistresses. This custom of combined polyandrous and polygynous unions, besides being consistent with a strong matrilineal lineage system, was almost certainly associated with the occupation of Nayar men as soldiers, since it began to die out shortly after the armies were disbanded, about 1810, and a hundred years before the lineage showed signs of disintegration.

The rules of mating were as follows. Sex relations were prohibited within the lineage, and with more than one man or one woman of the same lineage. The Nayar servant sub-castes of oil-mongers, funeral-priests, washermen, and barbers were endogamous, as were all the lower patrilineal castes and the serf-castes. Within the range of military and ruling sub-castes (except for the royal lineages which admitted no peers), all unions were permissible outside the lineage and the range of prohibited affines, and within the sub-caste. Furthermore, these sub-castes were knit together by 'hypergamous' unions between women of lower and men of higher sub-caste. Members of the three retainer sub-castes, which disputed for rank, had only temporary and sporadic sex-relations across sub-caste boundaries. These took place during war when soldiers were permitted to contravene the normal rules against dining with or touching members of other retainer sub-castes and might enter each others' houses in order to eat and sleep. More permanent relationships were encouraged between women of the retainer sub-castes and Kiriyaṭṭil, Śāmantan, royal, or Nambūdīri men; between Kiriyaṭṭil women and Śāmantan, royal, or Nambūdīri men; between Śāmantan women and royal or Nambūdīri men; and between royal women and Nambūdīri men. The royal lineages, acknowledging no others as peers, were obliged to marry all their women upwards and all their men downwards. The Walluvanād and Cochin princesses married Nambūdīri men, the princes Śāmantan, Kiriyaṭṭil, or retainer-women. The Zamorins at first married only some of their women to Nambūdīris, and the rest to men of the more ancient royal lineages of Beypore, Bettan, and Kodungalur, all of whom had been conquered by the Zamorins and made honoured vassals in their kingdom. At some time in the 18th century, the Zamorin's lineage gave up this practice and began to marry its women only to Nambūdīris, while continuing to marry its men to Śāmantan, Kiriyaṭṭil, and retainer-Nayar women.

¹Respectively called *Vettukāṭi*, *Aṭṭikūṣa* (*Chidigasa* in Cochin), *Vēthoṭṭāṣa*, and *Vīṭṭakāṭāṣa*. The small temple-servant castes who rank between Nambūdīris and Nayars and were also concerned in hypergamous marriages are for lack of space excluded from this discussion.

Nayak

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588 collapsed and the old system of differential land-rights between Nambūdiris and rulers on
 564 the one hand and their Nayar tenants on the other has been seriously undermined. Yet even
 178 today Nayers remark with pride that their lineage has 'fathers' in the lineages of their former
 landlords and chiefs, while chiefs and royalty alike revere their Nambūdiri *gnatons*, and boast
 that the blood of these Gods of the earth is running in their veins.

PART II. THE NAYAR *Tali-Rite* IN NORTH MALABAR

131 NORTH MALABAR LIES NORTH OF THE KORA RIVER, being the old kingdoms of Kolattiri,
 133 Kurumbrattiri, and Kadattunad. Except for the coast-towns expanded by Europeans, it is
 361 sparsely populated and mountainous; part of it is forest. Villages lie separated by hill ranges,
 [635] usually as clusters of houses on the hillsides surrounding small wet paddy-flats in the valleys.
 This contrasts with South Malabar and Cochin, where the coastal plain is wider, paddy-land
 extensive, and settlement usually continuous between villages.

195 Perhaps because of its difficult environment, North Malabar did not before 1799 approach
 631 the degree of political centralization achieved in the central area. The Kolattiri Rajas, it is
 true, temporarily conquered Kottayam, Kurumbranad, and Kadattunad, but the area was
 never consolidated as was the Zomorin's kingdom. Within the small kingdoms, *adavaris*
 [628] fought each other and rebelled against their Rajas, allying themselves with different rulers
 [629] as suited their needs of the moment. Neighbouring *desavaris* sometimes fought each other within
 the *add*, while within the *desam*, *kudipaga* (lineage-feud) persisted till modern times.

Consistent with this lack of political centralization, high-class Nayars were not divided
 564 into sub-castes with administrative and occupational functions. Instead they had exogamous
 clans, dispersed between many villages. In Kottayam and Kolattunad the bulk of Nayars
 631 were Nambiaris, independent land-owners owing only nominal allegiance to a chief. *Desavaris*,
 613 appointed by the Raja or the *adavaris*, had administrative powers in their villages but belonged
 423 to the same sub-caste as other Nambiaris. In most villages the land was divided between the
 [614] Nayar property-groups as owners, Nayar tenancies being less common than in the south.
Adavaris lineages, however, usually owned the land in the whole village where they lived,
 employed Nambiar tenants as retainers, and claimed superior caste-rank, calling themselves
 Samantan Nambiaris. Nambūdiri Brahmins are fewer in the north than in the south, especially
 since the Muslim invasions from Mysore in the 1760s, when many fled to Travancore.
 Those who remain live as landlords in widely separated villages, with local Nambiar lineages
 as retainers. The Nayar servant castes are spatially distributed as in the south. The lower
 polluting castes of manual workers are present in similar proportions, but Tiyyars and their
 washermen and barbers are matrilineal in North Malabar, patrilineal in the south.

613 The Nayar Kinship System. North Malabar Nayars, though trained in arms in the private
 1701 gymnasia of their lineages, were not recruited as a permanent militia of the kingdom. Instead
 566 they cultivated their own lands with the aid of Tiyyar tenants, the serf castes being absent over
 most of the area. It seems largely because of this difference of occupation, North Malabar
 591 Nayars are virilocal: a wife moves on marriage to the ancestral house of her husband, and
 613 remains with him with rare exceptions till his death. Her children are brought up by their
 594 father and commonly return to their own lineage at puberty. A boy then begins to manage
 582 his *taravadi* property under the direction of his *Adaranan*, while a girl is shortly afterwards
 married, from the lineage house, by common consent of her *Adaranan* and her father, often to
 the *Adaranan*'s son or to a maternal nephew of the father.

586 Divorce is permitted, but is rarer than in the south. Polygyny is rare, polyandry even
 595 traditionally forbidden. A cuckolded husband formerly cut off the hair of his wife and returned
 684 her to her lineage. The *gnatons* has customary rights in and obligations to his children. In
 851

K. M. PANIKKAR.—*Some Aspects of Nayar Life.*

237

Malayalam has an extensive

literature, and it has been developed almost entirely by the Nampadris and the Nâyars. The following essay is based on an examination of eighteenth-century literature. As far as it treats of present customs and ceremonies it is based on the personal experience and observations of the writer.

II.—THE VILLAGE ORGANIZATION OF THE NÂYARS.

A clear understanding of the life and customs of the Nâyars is impossible without an adequate idea of the strength of their village organization. In this connection it is necessary to make an important distinction at the very start. The village organisation in Malabar is utterly unlike the village communities in British India, and therefore should not be confused with them.¹ Malabar has no village community: it has only a village organization. To make the distinction clearer: in British India, in general, there are communities grouped together in a village, generally owning land in common and dealing with other villages as units. But in Malabar individual property, in the ordinary legal sense, is universal, and the village organization comes in only for specific purposes such as the management of the temple affairs and, in older days, for military training and mobilization.

Another distinction is that the Malabar village organisations include only Nayar families, though in the same village there may be Christians, Eabars, and Jews. For purposes of communal life other castes are outside the village organisation. All these castes, except the Parayars, the Pulayars, and all those who were, till the abolition of slavery, in bondage to their masters, live side by side. Another point to remember in this connection is that Malabar villages are not like British Indian villages, built according to a plan. Each house in a Malabar village stands apart in a separate compound and in each compound generally there is a house. It might happen that the compound nearest a Nayar's house is occupied by a Christian. But as far as the village organisation is concerned the non-Nâyars do not exist.

Malabar in older days was divided into ten or twelve states, each of which was ruled by a Rajah. These states were divided into *Nads* (countries); each of these *Nads* consisted of certain *Dissams*; and the *Dissams* were subdivided into *Amoes*. Later administrative division has abolished the first two to a great extent, though they survive in popular speech and in poetic language. But the *Amoes*, or villages, are wholly intact even now; indeed they form the unit of administration. Before the British conquest and the division of Nayar country into three parts, British Malabar, Cochin, and Travancore, Nayar society was built up on a feudal basis. Each of the *Nads* was under the control of a local magnate called *Nadu Vanki* (the ruler of the *Nad*). He had criminal and civil jurisdiction and the right to claim

¹ Cf. Mitchell, *Village Government in British India*. T. Fisher Unwin, 1915.

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K. M. PANIKKAR.—*Some Aspects of Nayar Life.*

634 He had criminal and civil jurisdiction and the right to claim
701 military service from the Nâyars under him. The *Nadu Vazhi* kept a local force
varying between five hundred and one thousand men, which they were obliged to
put into the field at the command of their Rajah. The *Nadu Vazhi* were kept
under control by the Rajah when he was able to do so. But in any case they were
bound to fight for him. Below these *Nadu Vazhi* were *Dasa Vazhi* (lords of the
Manor). They had the right of keeping a *Kalari* or a military academy. In each
village there was one *Dasa Vazhi* (sometimes more), who was called master (*Asin*)
by the Nâyars. He was their military preceptor in peace time and their leader
in war time.

631 The principal business of the *Dasa Vazhi* was to train the young men of *Dasa*
701 in his *Kalari*. All Nayar boys after twelve were supposed to attend the *Kalari*
874 and learn boxing, fencing, sword play, military formation, and the ordinary rules
of warfare. For such training the *Dasa Vazhi* was not paid. After eighteen the
boys were not supposed to attend the *Kalari*, but were required to be ready to start
for war at a day's notice.

108 The *Kalari*s are still in existence. Even now the Nayar young men who do not
874 go to English schools get some sort of a training with imitation swords and shields,
because swords are prohibited by the Arms Act. In certain families one male member
has to be proficient in this art so as to be able to teach the others. The *Kalari*s,
[346] though now visited by people only for the extreme beauty of their architecture,
are still used by the Nâyars of the *Dasa* as places of worship.

108 On the festival days in the village temple the Nâyars, who have been thus trained,
541 even now hold a review in martial array (*visla*). In Trivandrum, which is the
701 capital of the Maharajah of Travancore, this feature is very prominent. In other
places there are still *Potayaris* (*Pute*—war, and—to get ready). All the Nâyars
of the surrounding districts assemble, and the ceremonies which in former days
stood for military manoeuvres are held with great enthusiasm.

621 The centre of all the martial and, consequently, of the social life of the Nâyars
is, therefore, the *Dasa*. In each village there is a temple owned by the community.
794 The temple is generally self-supporting, and occasionally very rich. The temple
[346] authorities are appointed by the village. The power is generally vested in the
Pramanis, or the chief men. In each village there are certain families who have
the right of being consulted in all matters connected with it. The head of these
[631] *Pramanis* is the Lord of the Manor.

621 In describing the organization of the village, it is better to take one practical
example which is typical. Kavalam is such a village. I shall, therefore, confine
[121] myself to the description of the organization of that village.

[166] The village is supposed to consist of one hundred and fifty houses. This is the
traditional number, but at least fifty of these have emigrated. But though they
live in other parts of the country they are still considered to belong to this organiza-
tion. In all the ceremonies that require the sanction of the village the emigrant,

[i.e., The *Nadu Vazhi* -- Analyst]

a Nayar *taravud*, all the members are equally entitled to a share. The self-acquisitions of each member of a *taravud* are at his absolute disposal during his life-time, but this right lapses to the *taravud* on his death.¹ In families where the *karanavans* look after the welfare of each individual member and the savings of the junior members go to increase the wealth of the family, there is peace and prosperity. Such families are rarely found in these days. Times are changed, as also the conditions of the community, and the old and large families are disappearing through mismanagement. In the majority of cases, when the senior member takes up the management, he is too old and unfit to govern a score of men and women younger than himself and bound to him by no natural tie of affection. He often becomes a mere puppet in the hands of an unscrupulous but stronger member while the other members of the *taravud* suffer from the injustice consequent under such circumstances. In some cases he misappropriates the family property and alienates it in favour of his wife and children, and the gross acts of spoliation carried on by *karanavans* have reduced some of the respectable families in Malabar and elsewhere to poverty and misery. It is also said, that the junior members are disobedient and do not work for the common good and this state of things is also common everywhere. Another cause for the downfall of the ancient family system is the growing disinclination among its junior members to work for the common good of the *taravud* and their dislike to the rule of the *karanavan*.²

The Nayars who follow this *marumakkathayam* law of inheritance include nearly all the aristocracy of the country, but the notion that every *taravud* has an estate sufficient to feed an indefinite number of souls is unfounded and erroneous. Most of the families are poor, and the *karanavans* are mere tenant farmers cultivating a few acres of land on a precarious tenure, and a law which requires such a man, from the produce of his farm, to feed and provide for all the descendants of his female relatives from the time of their birth to their death, whether they work or not, is one of those laws which continue to exist in name but are actually disregarded in practice.³

In ancient times the rulers of Cochin held supreme sway in the territories which belonged to them. There were no regular councils, nor assemblies;

¹ Tribal organisation.
times.

1. II, Mad. H. C. R. 188.

2 and 3. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, pages 49-51.

631 and the Rajas were mostly guided by their own will and pleasure unless it ran counter to the customs of the country. Many
643 of them had learned Brahmans to instruct them in the fundamental and long established laws of the country.
[644]

646 Certain checks upon their arbitrary power existed in the form of general assemblies of the nation, but these were seldom held. These were of two kinds: those assembled under the orders of the Raja, and those assembled by the spontaneous will of the people. In the former case, messengers, who by right of birth and descent were entitled to that office, were despatched in all directions to summon the people. When
[203] assembled, they sat in a circle in the open air, while a number of Nayars kept guard over them. The propositions were then discussed, and the measures proposed were rejected or adopted by the unanimous silence or clamour of those present, but in affairs of minor importance not affecting the welfare of the whole community, the chiefs of the nation were summoned, and they decided the questions laid before them.
[228]

643 The assemblies summoned by the will of the nation were conducted in much the same manner, but with more impetuosity. They were held only in cases of emergency, when the Raja
646 was guilty of extreme tyranny or of gross violation of the law. Then all the landed proprietors were bidden to attend, and if
578 any one dared to refuse to obey the summons, the assembly sentenced his houses, gardens or estates to be devastated. If
[687] he persisted in his disobedience, he would be deprived of his privileges and votes, and might even be sentenced to banishment. As the object of such assemblies was to thwart the will of the ruler, he on his side did all he could to obstruct their holding such assemblies. The Raja had no right nor power to prevent them by force of arms, but he sent *Pandara Patti* (servants of the rulers) to provoke them with all manner of annoyances and to pelt them with stones, sand, and dirt. The Nayars on guard did their best to keep off the assailants with their shields, and, if any one of them, provoked beyond endurance, were to strike or hurt one of the youths, it would be regarded as treason, and, as such, the assembly would be liable to a heavy fine and would be deprived of its inviolability. The Raja might then disperse them by force of arms; but if he failed to subdue them, they would all desert their allegiance. Allies and neighbours did their best to intercede between the parties and to secure for everyone his proper
rights.

[131] Ghats, the height of which varies between five and over eight thousand feet.

[631] Before 1957, when the new State of Kerala came into being with the reorganization of the Indian States, the area included the large Madras district of Malabar, the French possession of Mahe, and the princely State of Cochin amalgamated with that of Travancore. The respective capitals were Calicut (today Kozhikode), Ernakulam, and Trivandrum, the French possession being limited to the town bearing the same name as itself.

133 All rivers in Kerala, except those of the more elevated taluk of the Wynaad, run from east to west, cutting the coastal strip into sections. Inland, however, vast stretches of practically stagnant water, comparable to lagoons, known locally under the name of backwaters, extend down the whole length of the State, affording uninterrupted communication.

133 Geologically, Kerala is a low tableland of red laterite and clay, fringed by a coast of alluvial formation. Laterite, from the name given to it by Dr Buchanan in 1800, is really a soil of decomposed gneiss, from which the Western Ghats are made. When dug up and left to the action of sun and rain, only the skeleton of hard material remains, sponge-like in appearance, from which blocks of building material are cut. It is not very resistant or long-lived, and gradually disintegrates into a red type of gravel, more or less finely granulated.

134 The resultant soil or loam is a well-balanced mixture of clay and sand, admittedly poor in organic matter, but well-suited to the special types of crops which have given Kerala its wealth.

241 Thus rice, coconuts, pepper and betel, arecanuts, jack fruits, mangoes and cashews, do extraordinarily well in it, helped as they are by the damp, warm climate constant throughout the year.

132 There are two monsoons in Kerala, the south-west monsoon of the summer, which is the principal one, and the north-west monsoon of the autumn which, lately, often fails.

137 In appearance, the landscape of Kerala varies very little from the coastal line to the towering peaks of the Western Ghats. Along the beach of fine sand, coconut trees in an unending perspective, raise their gently waving palm leaves in a manner reminiscent of the South Seas and of Ceylon. Jack fruit trees and mangoes behind them, being of a darker coloured foliage, give depth to the romantic scene. It is among these that the houses of the inhabitants of Kerala are to be found. Unlike the rest of India, human habitations are not grouped together here in villages and towns. Each stands isolated from its neighbours, in a garden-like compound surrounded by a stout fence of brambles or of

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said, by dividing it up between the rajas of Travancore, Cochin, Kolattiri, Kurumbranad, Walluvanad and others. To the Zamorin of Calicut, who was later to become so famous, he left only his sword with the recommendation to "die, kill and annex". The latter potentate and his descendants took the injunction seriously and very quickly in the two following centuries, the 14th and 15th, assumed a leading role on the Kerala stage. They encouraged Arab trade in spices and other commodities, and by their scrupulous honesty and absolute security of commerce, obtained and held it for fully two hundred years.

It was then that the first Europeans arrived on the scene. The Portuguese came to beign with, in an attempt to break the Moors' monopoly of Far Eastern products. Coming into conflict with their Mohammedan rivals and with their protégé the Zamorin, they successfully supported the raja of Cochin against these and thus gained a footing on the coast while taking over command of the sea. They were only forced out by the Dutch in the 17th century (although they still hold Goa further north, to this day), and the Dutch in turn were superseded by the British and the French, who settled respectively at Tellicherry and at Mahe, from which fortified places they fought each other for supremacy in the pepper trade for another two centuries.

In the 18th century, the Mohammedan rulers of Mysore descended on Kerala and, after forcibly converting a great number of its inhabitants to Islam, annexed large tracts of it. Tipu Sultan, however, the ally of Napoleon, fell foul of the British East India Company, which eventually defeated him at Seringapatnam in 1792. British supremacy in Kerala dates from that year and a system of farming out revenue to the local rajas was instituted. It proved to be a mistaken method of collection, and was the cause of the serious rebellions of Kerala Varma, Raja of the Padinnara Kovilagam of Kottayam, the Pazhassi raja, otherwise known as Pychy raja, in 1797 and from 1800 to 1805. With their termination, the British took over direct administration of Malabar, while leaving Cochin and Travancore to that of their rajas. They were to keep it until 1947 when India was given her independence.

Two years later, the States of Travancore and Cochin were merged to form a United State under the Maharaja of Travancore. In 1953, France finally relinquished her hold on Mahe, and in 1957, the whole coastal region from South Canara to Cape Comorin became the State of Kerala which we know today. The name has been variously interpreted as meaning either "land of coconut trees" or "land of the Cheras", an ancient Hindu dynasty of south India.

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conclusions, to which I may add those observations of mine in the field that appear to me to bear out his contentions most fully. 177
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In 1792, after the defeat of Tipu Sultan of Mysore by the British, the latter took over the direct administration of Malabar. As we have seen, they began by farming out the collection of revenue to the local rajas; very soon, however, they found this system unsatisfactory and took over the task themselves. A corps of British administrators was formed and put in charge of the work; from then onwards, cultural conditions in Kerala underwent a very great change. [48]

The term "Europeanism" has been used to cover all these aspects of Western foreign influence which have since then profoundly affected the local people's lives. This foreign influence has been followed since 1947 by recent reforms due to the policy of the present Congress Party Government of India, although these, too, have been inspired to a large extent by contact with the West. Today, a new force is making itself felt. Since the last elections in 1957, Kerala has been ruled by a government of the Communist Party, whose accession to power is, however, too recent for me to be able to give here any appreciation of the alterations it is seeking to impose on the State. [65]

"Europeanism" includes many varied and subtle innovations in the everyday life of the inhabitants of Kerala, some of which can be put down as gains and some of which, on the contrary, must be considered as losses. Aiyappan has attempted to establish a balance sheet of these for the Irava community (to be found on p. 126 of his book *Iravas and Culture Change*). As far as the whole of the Kerala population is concerned, it can be said that the term mainly covers such principal items as the following.

First of all, the displacement of traditional rulers and their replacement by European officials. This took place throughout the area, and only the maharajas of Cochin and of Travancore were retained; later, a resident responsible to the Madras government was attached to them. The new officials were scant respecters of caste. While obliged, by force of circumstance, to take into consideration the innumerable compartments into which native society was divided and subdivided, they nevertheless were inspired, in their dealings with the people and in their choice of assistants, by the Christian ideals of equality and individual merit, whereby they brought about a revolution in traditional methods of government. Only Islam, with the arrival of the Arab traders on the Malabar coast nearly one thousand years before, can be said to have brought anything similar to bear on the static outlook of the people; 177
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"Europeanism" further enhanced its influence in Malabar with the introduction of new industries and capitalistic enterprise. The coconut, cashew nut and coir industries employ thousands today and have created amongst the people an even greater dependence on the fluctuations of world prices than in the days of the pepper trade. Weaving, tile factories (such as the one founded by the Basel Mission), saw-mills, match factories and metal industries have given many people a new outlook on life which they could never have had in the old days, and has profoundly changed their traditional concepts. Prohibition introduced by the Congress Party Government, with its consequent forbidding of the ancient profession of toddy tapping, has thrown many Tiyas out of work, obliging them to seek their livelihood elsewhere, and modifying for this reason the traditional structure of their economy and family life. [177] [438] [656] [293] [564]

Greater and better medical facilities, as well as a growth in industrial productivity, have brought about a correspondingly sharp rise in the population, so much so, indeed, that today Kerala ranks first in density to the square mile out of the whole of India. Agricultural prosperity has unfortunately not kept pace with this advance, making it often difficult for everyone to obtain food, especially when the monsoon fails, as it often does in the latter part of the year. Foodstuffs, especially grain, have thus to be imported from outside, and when this is not sufficient, many seek work in other parts of the world, leaving their families for years at a time, to emigrate and hire themselves out as labourers in Ceylon, Singapore, and the Malay Federation. [177] [433] [161] [439] [464] [161]

It is not surprising, under the circumstances, that the old order in Kerala has crumbled. Of the rajas and maharajas of old, none are any longer in positions of responsibility, those of Cochin and Travancore having also been made destitute by the recent re-arrangement of States in India. The Nambudri Brahmins are, perhaps, those who, because of their priestly character, continue more than anyone else, to lead the ancient, traditional life. Many of them, however, have gone in for the new enterprises, and if they do not always themselves own and direct them, they have invested funds in them. The younger members of the illams appear to be increasingly dissatisfied with their lot, and do not seem prepared to accept the old imperatives of occupation and succession. It may not, after all be just a coincidence that the Communist Party Government now in power in Kerala is headed by a Nambudri Brahmin. [197] [631] [177] [524] [491] [465]

The Nayar caste is no doubt the one that has been the hardest hit by the sweeping changes brought about by altered conditions. But its

way of preliminary, a high kick in the air, followed by 526
squatting on the haunches, bounding high, turning,
twisting, pirouetting, and all the time swinging the
sword unceasingly above, below, behind the back, under
the arm or legs, in ever so many impossible ways.
Nāyar shields are made of wood, covered with leather,
usually coloured bright red. Within the boss are some
hard seeds, or metal balls loose in a small space, so that
there is a jingling sound like that of the small bells on
the ankles of the dancer, when the shield is oscillated or
shaken in the hand. The swords are those which were
used ordinarily for fighting. There are also swords of
many patterns for processional and other purposes, more
or less ornamented about the handle, and half way up
the blade."

"The Nāyars." Mr. N. Subramani Aiyar writes, 631 ●
"have a distinct feudal organisation, and the division of
their territories had an unmistakeable reference to it.
The territorial unit was the dēsam, presided over by a
Dāsavazhi. A number of dēsams adjoining one another
constituted a nādu, which was under the jurisdiction of
a chieftain called the Nāduvazhi. Above the Nāduvazhis
was the Rājah, the highest suzerain in the country. In
course of time, each nādu split itself up into a certain
number of taras, over the affairs of which a Karanavan,
or elder, presided. An assembly of these Karanavans 613
constituted the six hundred—an old socio-military 623
organisation of the Nāyars in mediæval times. These 631
six hundred are referred to in two places in the second 175
Syrian Christian document, which bears the date 925 623
A.D. In a South Travancore inscription, dated 371
M.E., the same organisation is referred to as Venat-
tarunuru, or the six hundred of Venad, and one of
their duties evidently related to the supervision of the

NAYAR

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- 631 working of temples and charitable institutions connected
 [175] therewith. As Venad was divided into eighteen districts
 [623] in ancient days, there might have been altogether
 eighteen six hundred in the country. The Nāduvazhis
 possessed considerable authority in all social matters,
 and possessed enough lands to be cultivated by their
 Kudiyans. A feudal basis was laid for the whole organi-
 sation. Large numbers served as soldiers in times of
 war, and cultivated their lands when the country was
 quiet. In modern times, none of them take to military
 service in Travancore, except those employed as sepoys
 in the Nāyar Brigade."

- [901] Concerning the organisation of the Nāyars, Mr.
 Logan writes that they were, "until the British occupied
 the country, the militia of the district (Malabar). This
 name implies that they were the 'leaders' of the people.
 Originally they seem to have been organised into six
 hundreds, and each six hundred seems to have had
 assigned to it the protection of all the people in a nād
 or country. The nād was in turn split up into taras, a
 Dravidian word signifying originally a foundation, the
 foundation of a house, hence applied collectively to a
 street, as in Tamil teru, in Telugu teruvu, and in
 Canarese and Tulu teravu. The tara was the Nāyar
 territorial unit of organisation for civil purposes, and
 was governed by representatives of the caste, who were
 styled Kāranavar or elders. The six hundred was
 probably composed exclusively of those Karanavar or
 elders, who were in some parts called Mukhyastans
 (chief men) or Madhyastans (mediators), or Pramānis
 (chief men), and there seem to have been four families
 of them to each tara, so that the nād must have originally
 consisted of one hundred and fifty taras. This tara orga-
 nisation of the protector caste played a most important

part in the political history of the country, for it was the great bulwark against the tyranny and oppression of the Rājas. The evidence of the Honourable East India Company's linguist (interpreter, agent) at Calicut, which appears in the diary of the Tellicherry Factory under date 28th May, 1746, deserves to be here reproduced. He wrote as follows: 'These Nāyars, being heads of the Calicut people, resemble the parliament, and do not obey the king's dictates in all things, but chastise his ministers when they do unwarrantable acts.' The parliament referred to must have been the kūttram (assembly) of the nād. The kūttram answered many purposes when combined action on the part of the community was necessary. The Nāyars assembled in their kūttrams whenever hunting, or war, or arbitration, or what not was in hand, and this organisation does not seem to have been confined to Malabar, for the koot organisation of the people of South Canara gave the British officers much trouble in 1832-33. In so far as Malabar was concerned, the system seems to have remained in an efficient state down to the time of the British occupation, and the power of the Rājas was strictly limited. Mr. Murdoch Brown, of Anjarakandi, who knew the country well, thus wrote to Mr. Francis Buchanan in the earliest years of the present (nineteenth) century regarding the despotic action of the Rājas when constituted, after the Mysorean conquest, the revenue agents of the Government of Haidar Ali. 'By this new order of things, these latter (the Rājas) were vested with despotic authority over the other inhabitants, instead of the very limited prerogatives that they had enjoyed by the feudal system, under which they could neither exact revenue from the lands of their vassals, nor exercise any, direct authority in their districts.' And

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631 again, The Rāja was no longer what he had been,
 643 the head of a feudal aristocracy with limited authority,
 but the all-powerful deputy of a despotic prince, whose
 military force was always at his command to curb or
 chastise any of the chieftains who were inclined to
 dispute or disobey his mandates. * From the earliest
 times, therefore, down to the end of the eighteenth
 century, the Nāyar tara and nād organization kept the
 country from oppression and tyranny on the part of the
 rulers, and to this fact more than to any other is due
 the comparative prosperity, which the Malayāli country
 so long enjoyed, and which made Calicut at one time
 the great emporium of trade between the East and
 631 the West. But, besides protection, the Nāyars had
 originally another most important function in the body
 politic. Besides being protectors, they were also
 supervisors or overseers, a duty which, as a very ancient
 deed testifies, was styled kāmam—a Dravidian word
 derived from the verb kāmuka (to see, etc.). Parasu
 Rāman (so the tradition preserved in the Kēralolpatti
 runs) separated the Nāyars into taras, and ordered that
 to them belonged the duty of supervision (*lit.* kan =
 the eye), the executive power (*lit.* kei = the hand, as the
 emblem of power), and the giving of orders (*lit.* kalpana,
 order, command), so as to prevent the rights from being
 curtailed, or suffered to fall into disuse. The Nāyars
 were originally the overseers or supervisors of the
 nād, and they seem to have been employed in this capa-
 city as the collectors of the share of produce of the
 land originally reserved for Government purposes. As
 remuneration for this service, and for their other func-
 tion as protectors, another share of the produce of the soil

* Buchanan, Mysore, Canara and Malabar.

seems to have been reserved specially for them. It ⁶³¹ would be well worth the study of persons acquainted with other districts of the Presidency to ascertain whether somewhat similar functions to these (protection and supervision) did not originally appertain to the Kāvalgars of Tamil districts and the Kāpus in the Telugu country, for both of these words seem to have come from the same root as the Malayālam kānam. And it is significant that the Tamil word now used for proprietorship in the soil is kāni-yātchi, to which word the late Mr. F. W. Ellis in his paper on Mirasi Rights assigned a similar derivation."

The occupation of the Nāyars is described by Mr. N. ⁴⁶³ Subramani Aiyar as "comprising all kinds of worldly pursuits. So late as the end of the eighteenth century, ^[701] there were with the then Mahārāja of Travancore a hundred thousand soldiers, consisting of Nāyars and Chovas, armed with arrows, spears, swords and battle-axes. The chief occupation of the Nāyars is agriculture. ^[24] Cultivation of a slipshod, time-honoured type is the forte of the Nāyar, for which he has always found time from times of old, though engaged in other occupations as well. In the Velakali, a kind of mock fight, which ^[526] is one of the items of the utasom programme in every ^[292] important temple in Malabar, the dress worn by the Nāyars is supposed to be their ancient military costume. Even now, among the Nāyars who form the Mahārāja's ^[24] own Brigade, agriculture, to which they are enabled to attend during all their off-duty days, goes largely to supplement their monthly pay. Various other occupations, all equally necessary for society, have been, according to the Kēralavaṇasakrama, assigned to the Nāyars, and would seem to have determined their original ^[357] sub-divisions. They are domestic servants in Brāhman

morning and evening and also in the leisure hours of the noon. I have often noted with interest the way in which even apparently illiterate people discuss among themselves the philosophy of life as preached in the Hindu sastras. 638

Village administration.—Panchayats were only introduced into the State in 1913. His Highness granted it as one of his boons during the celebration of his sixtieth birthday. "It is also my wish to revive, in commemoration of this occasion, the old village panchayat system which, I trust, will give facilities to the people to settle several matters of each village easily and quickly amongst themselves and give them some training in the art of self-government. It may also afford them better opportunities of representing their wants and grievances to the Darbar." With this Proclamation of His Highness the Raja begins the definition of the constitution and powers of the Village Panchayat Regulation. 623

Constitution.—Five members of whom the chief village officer of a revenue village (called locally "Parvathiakaran") is an ex-officio member. The rest are now nominated. It meets at least once a month.

POWERS.

I. *Administrative.*—(1) Maintenance and repairs of all minor irrigation works (i.e., works which do not require professional skill) below the cost of Rs. 500.

- (2) Maintenance of road avenues.
- (3) Maintenance of water-sheds.
- (4) Prevention of epidemic diseases.
- (5) Clearing and repairing of public wells and tanks.
- (6) Formation of Co-operative Credit Societies.
- (7) Improvement of public lanes and canals.

II. *Judicial.*—Civil disputes up to Rs. 50 with or without the consent of the parties, and up to Rs. 200 with the consent of the parties. 692

The judicial portion of the Regulation is still in abeyance and has not been brought into force in any panchayat in the State.

Even the administrative portion is applied only in three places in the taluk, since the rest have not sufficiently responded to the scheme. Watakancheri is still without a panchayat, though it is the headquarters of the taluk. 623

For executive work every taluk is under the direct administrative supervision of a Tahsildar (Revenue officer) who is also the Chief Treasury Officer. Until recently he was also a Magistrate, but this function is definitely taken away from him. Below him are Revenue Inspectors and village officers. The taluk in question, which has 74 villages, has 4 Revenue officers and more than 30 village officers. Watakancheri with an adjoining village is under a "Parvathiakaran" who collects the revenue and who has a clerk under him. This "Parvathiakaran" is paid Rs. 12 per month and his clerk Rs. 9. The revenue inspector supervises the survey work and collection work, and checks the village accounts. There are also a Munsif's Court and a Magistrate's Court in the village for the settlement of civil and criminal disputes. 631

Each taluk in the State has, as a rule, one Sanitary Inspector. 744

The village officers should bring to the notice of the Sanitary

622 initiate everything for the village, but the final sanction of his proposals rests with the Collector.

631 Above the village munsif is the Revenue Inspector who looks after the work of four or five village headmen. He has revenue functions only. For other purposes the Magistrate is the immediate superior of the *adhigari*. Next comes the Tahsildar, then the Sub-Collector, then the Collector.

692 Criminal cases are tried by the Magistrate. The Civil and Criminal Courts are situated in the village itself.

A story is told in the village that a poor agricultural man was asked by another, when the Collector had come to the village in one of his tours, whether the Collector or the *adhigari* was the superior officer. He replied, "I don't know, but the *adhigari* is richer, since he receives money yearly from us." The *adhigari's* pay is only Rs. 7 per mensem.

The jurisdiction of the *adhigari* with regard to the criminal cases lies only in cases of petty thefts and nuisances, and in civil matters when the amount under dispute does not exceed Rs. 50.

Panchayat.—There is a judicial panchayat for civil cases in which the amount under dispute does not exceed Rs. 50, or Rs. 200 if both the parties agree. This was introduced three years ago as a tentative measure, but it has proved a success in spite of its drawbacks. The jurisdiction of the panchayat courts extends to four or five villages; and the personnel of the court is a non-official president nominated by the Government and the *adhigaris* of the villages. Nearly 500 civil suits of a minor character were tried last year. The introduction of this system in small cases has caused enormous saving to the parties since the expenditure is small. There is no necessity for a stamped paper, etc. This institution is an advance in the right direction, but the personnel needs change, since they are all the Government representatives and consequently the people have no part to play in the constitution of the court.

364 There is no administration of sanitation. It is left to take care of itself. In theory there is a rule that the roads must be swept once a day and some coolies are appointed for the purpose, but the work is practically neglected on account of lack of supervision.

625 There is a Sub-Inspector of Police and under him a head constable and constables. The people can easily get the help of the police.

691 A large percentage of population is engaged in litigation. There are three reasons:—(1) The Muhammadans are addicted to litigation with regard to the partition of their property. In fact no partition takes place without having recourse to courts. (2) The peculiarity of land tenure has been already described. (3) The indebtedness of the poor and their inability to pay. The result is the majority of the population are litigants.

627 Sometimes compromises are arranged by a gentleman in whom both the parties have faith. There is no compromise committee for the purpose, but the people fearing the expenses of the law courts sometimes settle matters among themselves by means of a third person. Such cases are rare.

* The point of this story is that, in the Madras Presidency the Collector is the chief District officer. The Collector of Malabar, for example, rules over a population of close on three million people, subject to the Government in Madras.—Ed.]

The statistics of births and deaths of this desam are obtainable only for the year 1915. They are given below:—

Births.

Males	...	50	Hindu	...	84
Females	...	43	Muhammadan	...	9
		93			93

Deaths.

According to age—

Lifeless deliveries	...	...	...	...	7
Below one year	...	...	...	...	9
Between 1 and 10	...	...	...	...	13
" 10 and 20	...	...	...	...	1
" 20 and 30	...	...	...	...	7
" 30 and 40	...	...	...	...	3
" 40 and 50	...	...	...	...	...
" 50 and 60	...	...	...	...	3
" 60 and 80	...	...	...	...	5
					48

According to sex and castes—

Males	...	24	Hindus	...	43
Females	...	24	Muhammadans	...	5

There is no paracheri in the strict sense of the term. The depressed classes, mostly Cherumas, are still in a state of semi-serfdom, depending for everything on their landlords and masters.

Land.—The area of the desam by settlement is 1,803.40 acres. This desam together with Mattupalli, Peringode, Pillakkattiri, Tolukad, Mathur, Alikara, Kuttanad, Perumannur and Chalisseri desams formed the old revenue amsam of Kothachira. Now Kothachira revenue amsam includes only Kothachira, Mathur and Peringode desams.

The areas under each description of land—

	Wet.	Garden.	Occu- pied dry.	Un- occupied dry.	Un- assessed.	Inam.	Poram- boke.	Total.
	ACS. C.	ACS. C.	ACS. C.	ACS. C.	ACS. C.			ACS. C.
Private Jenmi.	445 27	209 43	197 16	935 71	...	...	...	1,787 57
Government Jenmi.	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Unregistered lands.	...	...	...	...	15 83	...	...	15 83
	445 27	209 43	197 16	935 71	15 83	...	...	1,803 40